



**Wespath**

BENEFITS | INVESTMENTS



2017 REPORT

# Clergy Well-Being Survey

Well-Being Survey of The United Methodist Church Active U.S. Clergy—2017

# Introduction

*Wespath Benefits and Investments conducts a biennial survey of The United Methodist Church (UMC) active U.S. clergy to gather comparative data on clergy well-being.*

Monitoring clergy well-being trends informs Wespath's development of programs and services to assist UMC clergy in leading healthier lives. Wespath shares this research with the denomination so we can all learn more about the health and well-being of our clergy. The state of clergy health has a significant effect on congregations, on communities and on the overall mission of the Church. Healthy clergy are inextricably linked to vitality in mission and ministry.

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# 2017 Survey Results

Wespath surveyed 4,000 UMC clergy for this fourth cycle. The questions covered a wide range of health topics and well-being areas, including the effects of vocational situations on clergy well-being.

1,360 clergy responded to the 100-question, online survey—a strong 34% response rate. The results represent a cross-section of active UMC clergy: personal status, clergy type, appointment status/jurisdiction and race/ethnicity. [See charts in the Appendix.]

The key findings demonstrated significant progress in clergy activity. Specifically, we have seen a 16% increase in moderate activity levels since 2013. Clergy report nearly four and a half hours of moderate physical activity per week, compared to two and a half hours for a representative sample of U.S. adults. Conversely, obesity levels remain high, and diabetes rates have not decreased. To improve well-being, Wespath plans to focus on nutrition education, prediabetes management and culture change among its populations.

**1,360** clergy responded

Representing a **34%** response rate



*Front cover image: Clergy Katie N. from Missouri Annual Conference used a HealthFlex/WebMD health coach to help her change her well-being habits. Katie worked to care as much for her own well-being as that of others.*

# 2017 Key Findings

## Negative



**80%** of respondents are currently obese or overweight

**43%** are obese—a much higher percentage than a demographically-matched sample of U.S. adults



**7%** suffer from depression as measured by frequency of depressive symptoms

**13%** are currently being treated for depression, managing their symptoms



**28%** have at least some functional difficulty from depressive symptoms—higher than a demographically-matched sample of U.S. adults



**45%** experience work-related stress

## Positive



**Fewer** report working long hours, balanced with less vacation time



**58%** report high or very high levels of overall financial knowledge



**52%** believe they are “on track” for a comfortable retirement\*



**Double** the amount of physical activity  
**4½ hours** of moderate activity per week vs. 2¼ hours



**78%** report they feel understood by family and friends

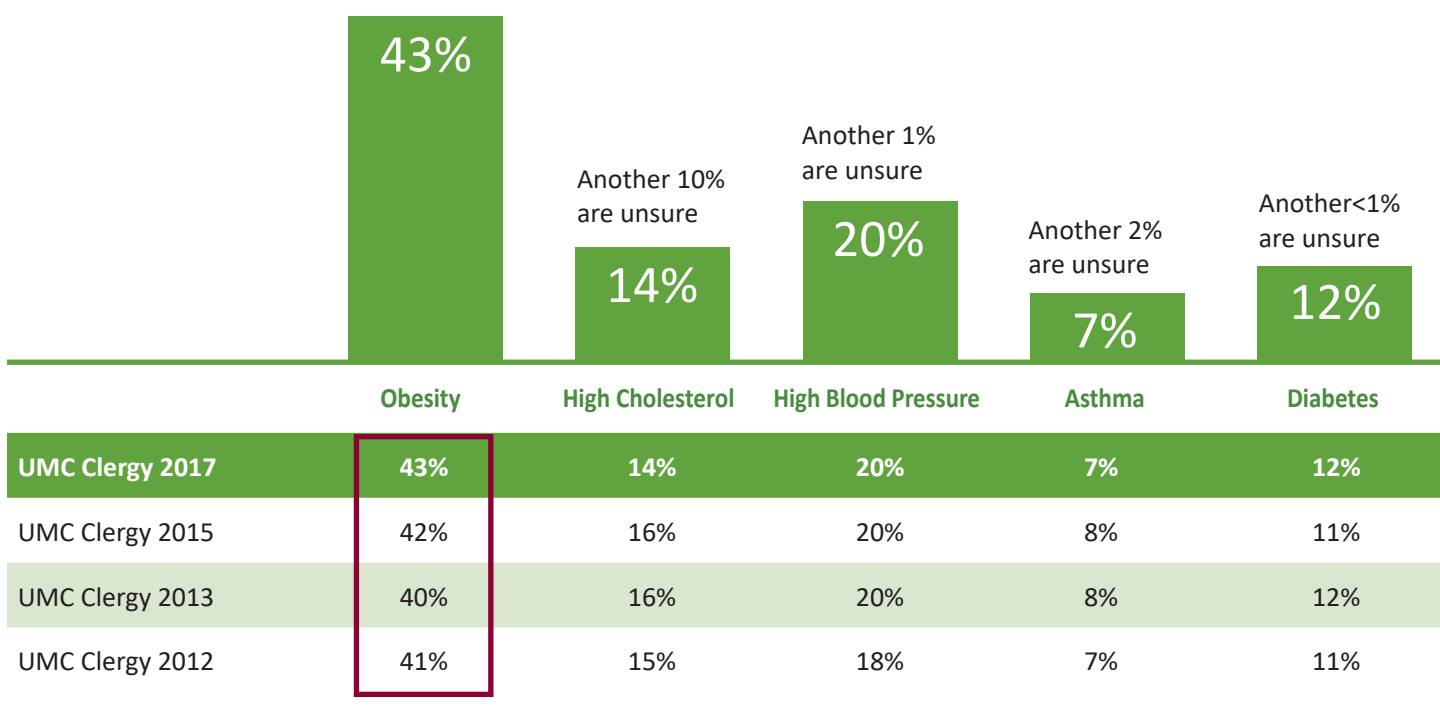
UMC

Clergy Well-Being Survey: Both good news and bad, including increased physical activity balanced with a slight increase in obesity, diabetes and emotional stress.

# 2017 Survey Results (continued)

## Physical Conditions

Although more than half of clergy report overall health as being “very good” or “excellent,” 43% are currently obese—much higher than a demographically-matched sample of U.S. adults—and an additional 37% are currently overweight. In addition, 20% currently have high blood pressure; 16% have high cholesterol; 7% have asthma and 12% have diabetes.



**□ Substantially higher than matched sample benchmark: 33% for matched sample of U.S. adults in 2015**

We know that exercise helps fight obesity and depression. Wespith offers an effective tool through Virgin Pulse, an activity program that motivates, tracks and rewards activity efforts. Adoption of this program across the denomination has grown to 87% of U.S. annual conferences and general agencies participating. The results of our Virgin Pulse program efforts are reflected in this year’s survey as moderate physical activity among our population is reported as nearly twice that of the national average—4 ½ hours vs. 2 ½ hours per week. Great progress. We know there is more work to do.

Exercise helps fight obesity and depression. Wespith has a new Physical Activity Toolkit that provides a variety of thoughtful ways you can work activity into any setting.



## Depression

In terms of emotional well-being, 7% of clergy suffer from depression as measured by frequency of depressive symptoms. More than one-quarter (28%) suffer from depressive symptoms. This rate is substantially higher than a demographically-matched sample of U.S. adults. Those currently being treated for depression rose from 11% two years ago to 13% now.

Wespath offers an Employee Assistance Program through its health plan to help our participants work through emotional issues.

### Depression and Functional Difficulty from Symptoms

	UMC Clergy 2017	UMC Clergy 2015	UMC Clergy 2013	UMC Clergy 2012	Matched U.S. Adults '13-'14
Suffer from depression	7%	7%	5%	6%	5%
At least some difficulty working, taking care of things or getting along with others	28%	26%	26%	28%	11%

Substantially higher than matched sample benchmark

Clergy endure a heavy emotional load in their work, with little down time. Clergy may also experience emotional stress due to the nature of itinerancy and the appointment-making process.

At least one intrusive ministry demand (e.g., decision was made that affected the clergyperson or his/her family without any consultation) was cited by nearly half (48%) of respondents, further taxing emotional well-being. Also, there was an increase (to 30% from 26% two years ago) of clergy who felt lonely and isolated in their work. From a social well-being perspective, fewer clergy in this survey say that family and friends understand them most of the time (decline to 78% from 81% two years ago).

Wespath offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through its health plan to help our participants work through these issues, and so clergy can have a place to share the weight of what they carry emotionally. The EAP's Work/Life Services program provides support and resources for many everyday problems people face when they relocate. It helps clergy find immediate support such as health care, elder care and child care providers, but also assistance with everyday tasks such as time management or locating a licensed plumber.

Visit [Wespath.org](http://Wespath.org) or e-mail us at [wellessteam@wespath.org](mailto:wellessteam@wespath.org) for the many ways we can help.\*



**Employee Assistance Program**



**Virgin Pulse**



**Tools for Well-Being webinars**



**Blueprint for Wellness**

*\*Some services only available to HealthFlex participants.*

# 2017 Survey Results (continued)

## Financial Stress

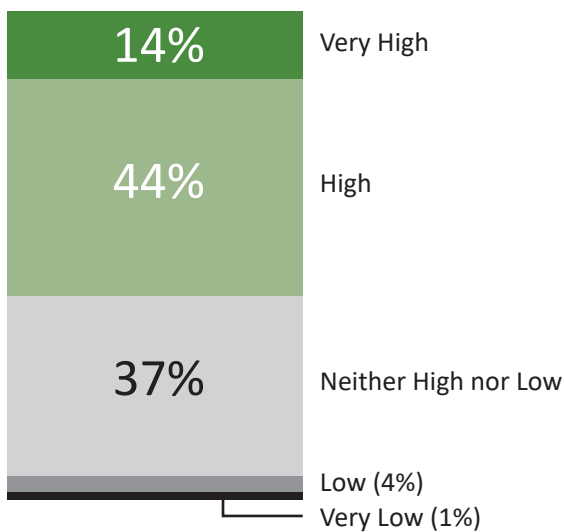
Clergy report their financial situation to be:

	2017	2015	2013	2012
Not at all stressful	27%	31%	29%	27%
Slightly stressful	33%	35%	34%	35%
Moderately stressful	29%	24%	25%	26%
Very stressful	7%	7%	8%	8%
Extremely stressful	4%	3%	4%	4%

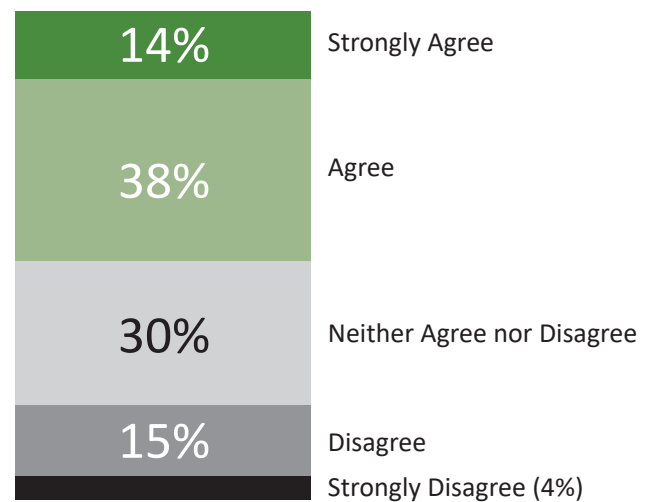
Two out of five (40%) respondents find their financial situation at least moderately stressful, a six percentage point increase from two years ago. Of those, 11% report their financial situation as very or extremely stressful.

## Perceived Financial Knowledge and Retirement Readiness\*

### Financial Knowledge



### On Track for Retirement

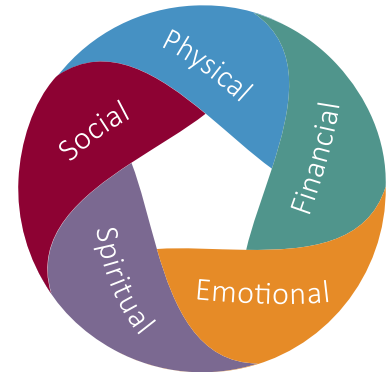


\*New in 2017

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## Providing Well-Being Support

Improving and sustaining clergy well-being requires education of leaders at the denominational and local church levels to promote and expect healthy practices across multiple dimensions of well-being. Wespeth provides support to the whole UMC. A variety of resources such as “50 Ways to Support Your Pastor’s Well-Being” offer practical materials for the connection to use to work together for stability and improved well-being. The Dimensions newsletter focuses on a different dimension of well-being each issue and shows how the dimensions work together for a better you.



*Five Dimensions of Well-Being*

## Improvement Focus

We recognize that **improved nutrition** is key to improving and reversing the physical trends that we find of greatest concern for our participants. **Healthy eating habits** in work settings were identified through earlier research as a strong factor of clergy well-being. Risks to health include obesity, high cholesterol, hypertension and prediabetes.

We encourage the Connection to take advantage of the resources available from Wespeth, which include:

- **Well-Being Resource Guide**
- **Prediabetes Prevention**
  - Prediabetes toolkit
  - Virgin Pulse activity program
  - Webinar: What Do You Need to Know about Prediabetes?
- **Healthy Eating**
  - Weight Watchers
  - Eat Right for Healthy Blood Pressure resource
  - Dimensions newsletter including healthy recipes each issue
- **Resiliency**
  - Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for many ways to alleviate personal stress
  - Stress Management handout

Well-being programs and outreach can be demographically-tailored as groups (e.g., race or gender) face unique health risks. Efforts to address occupational stress are equally important, focusing on factors such as pastoral role, number of charges and number of appointment changes.

Wespeth recognizes that *improved nutrition* is key to improving and reversing the physical trends that we find of greatest concern for our participants.



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# Clergy Well-Being Trends and Support

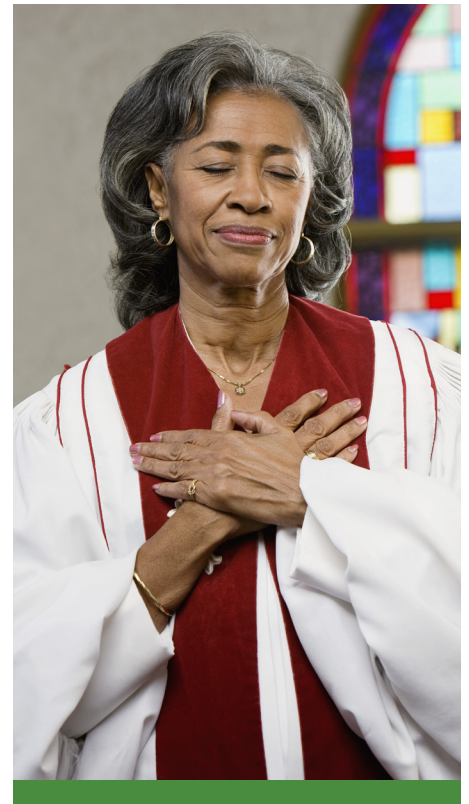
## Key Demographic Differences

- **Male clergy** have higher rates of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, and are more likely to experience a lack of spiritual well-being
- **Female clergy** have higher rates of asthma and arthritis, and are more likely to experience occupational stress
- **Female clergy** report exercising less often than their male counterparts
- **Older clergy** suffer from more physical ailments, but younger clergy have higher rates of asthma and depression, and also show higher levels of risk on all spiritual and occupational stress dimensions
- **White/non-Hispanic clergy** score lower on spiritual health measures
- **African-American clergy** have higher rates of hypertension and cholesterol but report lower levels of stress
- **Asian clergy** have lower rates for several health conditions, including weight, hypertension, arthritis, asthma and diabetes
- **Hispanic clergy** have higher rates of depression (a reversal from 2015)

## Key Vocational Differences

- **Part-time local pastors** report lower levels of stress and hostility in their ministry and occupational settings, and higher levels of spiritual health
- Clergy in **full-time appointments** experience more depression, lower spiritual vitality, and more stress and hostility in their occupational settings
- Clergy in **extension ministries** report better health in terms of weight, diabetes and hypertension, but more stress and hostility in their work environments
- Clergy at **smaller churches** have higher physical health risks; those at **larger churches** have higher spiritual health and occupational stress risks
- Clergy who **change appointments** more frequently show higher levels of risk across several physical, emotional, spiritual and stress dimensions
- Those in **cross-racial or cross-cultural appointments** report higher spiritual vitality and well-being, and more positive ministry settings

Male clergy have higher rates of cardiovascular diseases and diabetes; female clergy have higher rates of asthma and arthritis, and are more likely to experience occupational stress.



*Survey conducted by Versta Research. Survey was initially designed in 2012 by Wespeth in collaboration with Virginia Conference Wellness Ministries, Ltd., Duke Clergy Health Initiative and Duke Center for Spirituality, Theology and Health.*



# Appendix

## Demographic Differences—Personal Status

Key Measures	Gender		Age*		Married		Children in Home		Income*		Geography*	
	M	F	Younger	Older	Yes	No	Yes	No	Lower	Higher	More Rural	More Urban
<b>HEALTH OUTCOMES ✓ higher risk</b>												
Overall self-assessed health									✓		✓	
Body Mass Index (BMI)								✓	✓		✓	
Diabetes (ever)	✓			✓				✓			✓	
Diabetes (current)	✓			✓				✓			✓	
Hypertension (ever)	✓			✓				✓	✓		✓	
Hypertension (current)	✓			✓				✓			✓	
High cholesterol (ever)	✓			✓				✓				
High cholesterol (current)				✓								
Heart attack	✓			✓				✓			✓	
Heart disease	✓			✓	✓			✓			✓	
Stroke				✓					✓		✓	
Arthritis (incl. rheum.), gout, lupus, fibromyalgia		✓		✓				✓			✓	
Asthma (ever)		✓										
Asthma (current)												
<b>Depression</b>												
Functional difficulty from depressive symptoms			✓				✓					
Social connection		✓	✓			✓						
Spiritual vitality—presence of God in daily life			✓				✓					
Spiritual vitality—presence of God in ministry			✓				✓		✓		✓	
Spiritual well-being			✓				✓					
<b>STRESSORS ✓ higher risk</b>												
Health of congregation/ministry setting			✓						✓			
Clergy occupational stress		✓	✓			✓	✓					✓
Hostility of church environment		✓	✓				✓					✓
Perceived stress		✓	✓				✓					
Financial stress			✓			✓	✓		✓			
<b>PROTECTIVE BEHAVIORS ★ doing better</b>												
Moderate activity	★											
Vigorous activity	★		★									
Sleep		★										
Vacation days										★		★

Row contains legend information

\* Differences noted reflect a general trend across the spectrum, not a specific split of young/old, low/high, smaller/bigger, etc.

# Appendix (continued)

## Demographic Differences—Clergy Type

Key Measures	Membership					Ministry		# Charges		Church Size*		Pastoral Role			Other Roles					
	Full	Elder Full	FT Local Pastor	PT Local Pastor	Other	Pastoral	Ext.	Single	Mult.	Smaller	Bigger	Sole	Lead	Assoc.	Bishop	DS	Planter	Dev/pr	Chaplain	
<b>HEALTH OUTCOMES</b> ✓ higher risk ○ lower risk																				
Overall self-assessed health			✓	✓		✓			✓	✓		✓	○							
Body Mass Index (BMI)		○			○	✓						✓								
Diabetes (ever)			✓			✓				✓				○						
Diabetes (current)			✓			✓				✓				○						
Hypertension (ever)		○		✓	○	✓						✓								
Hypertension (current)				✓	○	✓														
High cholesterol (ever)	✓		✓											○						
High cholesterol (current)	✓													○			○			
Heart attack		○																		
Heart disease	✓		✓						✓											
Stroke																				
Arthritis (incl. rheum.), gout, lupus, fibromyalgia										✓									✓	
Asthma (ever)				○																
Asthma (current)																				
Depression				○																
Functional difficulty from depressive symptoms				○																
Social connection										✓										
Spiritual vitality—presence of God in daily life			○	○			✓				✓									
Spiritual vitality—presence of God in ministry			○	○							✓	○								
Spiritual well-being			○	○							✓									
<b>STRESSORS</b> ✓ higher risk ○ lower risk																				
Health of congregation/ministry setting						✓			✓	✓		✓	○					✓	✓	
Clergy occupational stress				○			✓				✓	○	✓							
Hostility of church environment				○			✓													
Perceived stress				○																
Financial stress		✓	✓	○									○			○				
<b>PROTECTIVE BEHAVIORS</b> ★ doing better ☒ doing worse																				
Moderate activity				★						★		★						☒		★
Vigorous activity																		☒		
Sleep													☒							
Vacation days	★	★		☒			★	★			★		★							☒

Row contains legend information

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## Demographic Differences—Appointment Status/Jurisdiction

Key Measures	Years in Ministry*		% Appointment		Appointment Changes*		Jurisdiction					Cross-Racial/ Cultural Appt.	Commuter Marriage	Clergy Couple
	Short	Long	PT	FT	Fewer	More	NC	NE	SC	SE	W			
<b>HEALTH OUTCOMES</b> ✓higher risk ○ lower risk														
Overall self-assessed health						✓	○				○			
Body Mass Index (BMI)							✓			✓		○	○	
Diabetes (ever)												○		
Diabetes (current)												○		
Hypertension (ever)			✓								○	○		
Hypertension (current)			✓					✓				○		○
High cholesterol (ever)		✓								✓	○			
High cholesterol (current)		✓								✓				
Heart attack		✓												○
Heart disease		✓				✓								○
Stroke														
Arthritis (incl. rheum.), gout, lupus, fibromyalgia		✓												
Asthma (ever)						✓					○			
Asthma (current)											○			
Depression		✓		✓		✓							○	
Functional difficulty from depressive symptoms				✓		✓					○			
Social connection	✓		✓			✓						✓		
Spiritual vitality—presence of God in daily life				✓		✓						✓	○	○
Spiritual vitality—presence of God in ministry		✓		✓		✓						✓	○	
Spiritual well-being						✓						✓	○	✓
<b>STRESSORS</b> ✓higher risk ○ lower risk														
Health of congregation/ministry setting	✓					✓							○	
Clergy occupational stress				✓		✓			✓	○	✓			
Hostility of church environment				✓		✓								
Perceived stress						✓				○	✓			
Financial stress						✓				✓	○			
<b>PROTECTIVE BEHAVIORS</b> ★ doing better ☒ doing worse														
Moderate activity					★			☒	☒	★	★		★	
Vigorous activity		★						☒	☒		★		★	
Sleep									☒			★	☒	☒
Vacation days		★		★		★				☒	☒			

Row contains legend information

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# Appendix (continued)

*Caring For Those Who Serve*

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wespath.org

## Demographic Differences—Race/Ethnicity

Key Measures	White	African-American	Asian	Hispanic	Other	White		African-American		Asian		Hispanic		Other	
						M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
						<b>HEALTH OUTCOMES</b> ✓higher risk ○ lower risk									
Overall self-assessed health															
Body Mass Index (BMI)			○						✓		○				
Diabetes (ever)			○		✓		○		○						
Diabetes (current)			○		✓		○		○						
Hypertension (ever)		✓	○		✓		○					✓		✓	
Hypertension (current)		✓	○		✓		○							✓	
High cholesterol (ever)	✓	✓			○		○							✓	
High cholesterol (current)														✓	
Heart attack							○								
Heart disease							○								
Stroke															
Arthritis (incl. rheum.), gout, lupus, fibromyalgia			○				✓								
Asthma (ever)			○				✓								
Asthma (current)															
Depression	✓				✓										
Functional difficulty from depressive symptoms	✓	○			✓										
Social connection							✓								
Spiritual vitality—presence of God in daily life	✓											○			
Spiritual vitality—presence of God in ministry	✓														
Spiritual well-being	✓	○													
<b>STRESSORS</b> ✓higher risk ○ lower risk															
Health of congregation/ministry setting	✓				✓										
Clergy occupational stress		○					✓								
Hostility of church environment	✓	○			✓										
Perceived stress		○					✓								
Financial stress		○			✓										
<b>PROTECTIVE BEHAVIORS</b> ★doing better ☒ doing worse															
Moderate activity							☒								
Vigorous activity		★					☒								
Sleep		☒	☒				★			★					
Vacation days		☒													

Row contains legend information

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